

**Washington State Conservation Commission**  
**Watershed Data Pilot Project – WSCC RFI Vendor Conference Q and A**

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The following questions were answered at the December 12 RFI vendor conference:

1. What background can you give us on how and why this project was funded?

A. Legislation was passed that funded the pilot project. The intent was to see if a commercial system is available to give the conservation districts a way to bring together a complete picture of the projects they are doing to meet their needs, and to bring together monitoring data to help them better express their needs and progress being made.

2. Did WSCC request funding from the legislature from this project?

A. A budget proposal was submitted by WSCC that was included in the Governor's budget, but the legislature did include funding for the project.

3. Do you have a particular watershed in mind for the project?

A. A letter soliciting conservation districts' interest is out. A few conservation districts have responded. One western Washington conservation district will be chosen for the WDP.

4. How much information will be collected, how much data will be brought in from other databases?

A. The number of projects to be captured will be in the dozens, not hundreds. Monitoring data will be limited to a few well definable measures. Data may come in from other data sources, but much of it is likely to be captured by original data entry on projects and monitoring. This will be defined specifically before the RFP.

5. Should the vendor have subject matter expertise?

A. It will be helpful for the vendor to have experience in watershed and habitat health to facilitate completion of the pilot project in the limited time frame. It won't be a mandatory requirement. We will have to evaluate which vendor can most successfully support our objectives.

6. Will vendors wishing to propose solutions to part of the requirements be able to participate in the RFP?

A. WSCC at present anticipates selecting a prime vendor that will bid their own product set or a team (if necessary) to meet the project objectives; as opposed to WSCC selecting and contracting with individual vendors and integrating their efforts to do the pilot.





7. One objective of the WDP is to support resource allocation decisions. Where are the resource allocation decisions being made?

A. Decisions are made at all levels. Conservation districts can have funding from local government and other sources. Regional and state level boards make funding decisions about salmon recovery funds. Some decisions at the federal level are also supported with data provided locally.

8. Will you provide information on the stakeholders whose information needs may need to be met during the pilot project?

A. Yes. We will specify the scope of the project including the project participants.

9. Is there a bias toward COTS systems? It will be difficult to provide a more customized system in the short timeframe available.

A. The purpose of the RFI is to determine what systems are available in the market place. These may be systems that are a good fit or close fit already as they are designed for our business, or toolkits that can rapidly put together the capabilities we need. As time is limited, the vendor selected by the RFP will have to be able to be quickly responsive. We hope the RFI will clarify what is possible.

10. The biggest challenges tend not to be the technology, but in understanding the business processes, bringing together the people, and reaching agreements as to what is to be done. How will this be managed?

A. Over the next two months, WSCC will be creating the team, defining the scope and requirements, and a developing a project plan that will feed the RFP. The vendor will need a clear path to make a clear bid. As this is a pilot project and our time is short, we will seek to simplify the approach as much as possible to focus on proving the concepts vs. assuring that we are ready for a statewide rollout.

11. Our handheld tools allow flexible data form development and inclusion of help information. As the handheld will be used by many agencies, is it possible to develop a separate support structure at the state to support handheld environmental data collection?

A. Answering this question is likely to be an outcome of the project, vs. being able to answer it at this time.

12. Will you be defining the monitoring measurements you want to do up front?





A. Yes. We will define a basic set of monitoring measures to include in the RFP that is consistent with the pilot objectives and scope, and the needs of the conservation district selected to use the pilot system.

13. How much will the system support grants management and financial management?

A. While we will collect some cost information for the projects to support decision making and reporting, grants and financial management functionality will not be part of the solution considered during this pilot project.

14. Will remotely sensed measurement be part of the monitoring data collection on the project?

A. The initial scope of the project does not include remote sensing. We may find that the natural resource agencies have data they collect using remote sensing that will be useful to this project, but we don't anticipate implementing new remote sensing capabilities.

15. Which agencies will do the monitoring measures anticipated to be done during the project?

A. We will have a volunteer conservation district which will likely do some field measurements. The three natural resource agencies – Ecology, Fish and Wildlife, and Natural Resources – are specified in the enabling legislation as users of the handheld monitoring technology to be piloted. We are determining at this time the extent to which these state agencies are likely to participate. So, both local and state staff are likely to be involved in data collection consistent with the initiating legislation.

16. Can you clarify what you mean by habitat health?

A. The primary way we are describing habitat health is through the habitat categories described in the handout. The habitat categories are characteristics of the habitat that can have more specific measures that can be made to characterize the health of a habitat. The local planners have used this approach to express their needs and to identify projects to be done. There are examples in the handout.

17. How will you determine the business rules used in supporting resource allocation decisions?

A. We anticipate an approach that captures parameters that enable us to select projects based on various views of what the priorities are. For example, a project may be associated with a particular stream, address a particular habitat category,





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or support a particular species. The local plans may prioritize geographic areas, habitat categories, or particular species based on needs assessed. Decision support would enable identification of projects based on parameters selected by the users.

18. Will you specify monitoring data required of the handheld in advance?

A. Yes, we will have to specify the monitoring we wish to do prior to the RFP.

19. Will the mapping data used to establish the basis for mapping in the pilot be established in advance? Will there be a central repository of mapping data?

A. Yes, we will have to designate existing GIS data available to be used in advance. The conservation district selected may not have GIS data, but desired sources will be identified for the vendor. We will be specific about this data prior to the RFP. We don't expect to establish a central repository of mapping data as part of this project, but will use other sources.

20. Will you expect the database to be populated with data that already exists?

A. We don't know that the selected conservation district will already have project data in a database. If they do, we may be able to use this data to populate a database. We don't want them to have to do redundant work.

21. Will you require the pilot to integrate tightly with other data repositories to keep them in sync for GIS or for other data?

A. No, this project will not tightly integrate with other data systems. The overall integration strategy is being developed. We will focus on the needs of the conservation districts keeping in mind the standards articulated in the RFI. Data exchanges will be limited. During the pilot we may identify future opportunities for data integration to improve the value of the systems and include this in our report to the legislature.

22. How standardized are the monitoring measurements from data collector to data collector?

A. We will be identifying monitoring measures from existing studies and the SRFB monitoring standards that will comprise the measures we will implement. (A vendor commented that the handheld devices can include helpful information about how to do monitoring measures.)

23. Will the state be willing to select a vendor that is not a US company or will do some of the work offshore?





A. We have made a specific request to the Department of Information Services. DIS confirms that there are no restrictions on buying services from non-US companies. There are specific rules limiting Internet VPN connectivity between the state's SGN (Statewide Governmental Network) and points outside the US.

24. Will the users enter GIS information themselves?

A. We anticipate that the field devices will be GPS aware and will enable attaching GPS coordinates to a measurement. We don't anticipate that the handheld devices will have further GIS capabilities.

25. Has WSCC designated specific platforms and architectures that must be complied with in the RFI?

A. No. At this time, we want to understand what platforms the vendors have used to implement their solutions. We may be more specific in the RFP.

26. Will the RFI responses result in narrowing down the field of vendors?

A. No.

27. What hosting support will be required? Will you be clear about the level of support and standards to be complied with?

A. WSCC has limited technology capability, so some support may be required. We are checking with other state agencies for potential hosting support. We also want input from the vendors on what support they would be comfortable providing for hosting. We will specify the hosting requirements or interaction requirements in the RFP.

28. Will conservation districts be required to use this system in lieu of or in addition to their own systems?

A. If the selected conservation district has a system, we will have to make it easy for them to also use the pilot site, perhaps by data transfer. One of our objectives is to demonstrate a way to bring together data in local systems.

29. Will GIS data in the field include information other than location; for example, will data collected include polygons or associate locations with named features?

A. We would like to hear from vendors what is possible. Any GIS data collected will have to work with state standards. We will have to determine where it may be desirable to collect data beyond single point locations prior to the RFP.





30. Will ADA standards apply to the pilot application?

A. We will make references to the state's ADA standards required in the RFP. The state's standard is at <http://www.isb.wa.gov/tools/webguide/accessibility.aspx>. Please indicate whether any of these standards would pose a challenge to your support of the pilot project in your response to RFI question 3.1.8.

31. Having a system ready to go in 60 days is an unrealistic expectation. Can you start earlier or take longer?

A. We recognize that the scope of what we could try to do is very large. We are seeking your feedback on how best to meet the project objectives in the timeframe available. We will have to specify a scope, based on our findings from the RFI and additional deliberation, that can be completed within the project constraints.

32. Training is also required within the first 60 days. How will training be possible if the system is not ready?

A. This requirement implies that the system can be ready for training within the schedule. We also expect to control the number of people to be trained and find ways to involve them in planning and testing to make training easier.

The following questions were submitted by email:

33. Is the proposed pilot project and system intended to lead eventually to the implementation of an information system that will be the main program and operational management system for the Conservation Districts in Washington?

A. The legislation granting funding made no provision for funding beyond the pilot project. A successful effort may lead to future requests for funding to pursue implementing a system. A new procurement will likely be required at that point to establish a long term solution.

34. At the RFI stage can you provide examples or some additional description of the kinds of information that will be gathered in the field using hand held devices?

A. The handout provided at the vendor conference and available at <http://watershedpilot.scc.wa.gov/> includes effectiveness monitoring examples.

35. Are vendors expected to provide pricing for hardware and third-party COTS packages such GIS software? Washington State may have supply arrangements in place which may be a better vehicle for obtaining such pricing.





A. Vendors may choose to provide hardware and software pricing that they predict would be applicable to this project. In lieu of pricing, vendors may describe the specific hardware and software they would use or require in enough detail that we can obtain prices that may be available to state agencies through state contracts.

36. With regards to project cost management and reporting capabilities is there a legacy system that the pilot must integrate with?

A. While we haven't selected a conservation district to work with yet, some conservation districts do have systems to manage projects. Some conservation districts use PRISM to manage projects for salmon recovery funded by the SRFB. We would not seek tight integration with existing systems, but may specify a data file to be translated to populate the pilot system to avoid having to do dual entry if possible.

37. What indices are used to monitor project progress and/or project effectiveness?

A. Using the IAC PRISM system as an example, projects may be described in terms of specific objectives for habitat restoration. For example, the number of miles of stream bank treated, the number of acres rid of invasive plants, the number of blockages removed, or the amount of water flow diverted. Further examples exist in the monitoring measure standards referenced in the RFI. Other measures like due dates or planned vs. actual costs are common measures.

38. What systems exist currently for data capture and upload?

A. Some conservation districts use PRISM to capture project data. Some may have their own systems for this. Many conservation districts and local entities have home grown, commercial, or publicly provided systems to capture data about specific research efforts or surveys on habitat health.

39. Can we assume that this system is fairly standalone without having to interact with other machines/systems?

A. The pilot project will have to be substantially standalone to be doable within the project constraints. We have, however, reserved the possibility of trying to use data that is already present about projects or monitoring measures to populate the pilot system if we find that this data appears valuable and useful to save redundant entry.

40. Portal can be a gateway to more than just the GIS data. It can be updated to link to other resources and become an integral part of the State architecture. How is that to be determined?





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A. At this time, we seek your input on what is possible so that we can finalize the scope for the pilot based on existing and applicable capabilities. We don't have enough information at this time to answer this question.

41. Are the ISB policies and Standards, mentioned on Page 7 of the RFI, the same as the documents & URL's provided on Page 12?

A. There are more standards that govern the management of technology and technology investments for Washington State government. Please refer to <http://www.isb.wa.gov/policies.aspx> for further information.

42. Are the PRISM and UEPRS systems used by the Conservation Districts?

A. Yes, more or less. Many conservation districts directly use PRISM to track projects with SRFB funding. UEPRS is not as directly used. UEPRS most often receives project information from other systems, including PRISM. To this extent, conservation district projects may be in UEPRS.

